

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DACCA 02568 121106Z
ACTION NEA-10

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O R 121045Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4618
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2568

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BG, IN
SUBJ: INDIA TURNING OVER MISCREANTS AND OTHERS TO BANGLADESH?

REF: DACCA 2232

1. ITTEFAG, THE LARGEST CIRCULATION BENGALI DAILY IN BANGLADESH AND A RESPONSIBLE NEWSPAPER, CARRIED A FRONT-PAGE STORY MAY 12 ANNOUNCING THAT "HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS OF THE DERENSE DEPARTMENT AND BSF" WOULD BE PRESENT MAY 15 TO TURN OVER TO BANGLADESH AUTHORITIES 16 CIVIL AND MILITARY OFFICERS AND 250 WOMEN IDENTIFIED AS BANGLADESHI CITIZENS WHO HAD CROSSED OVER TO INDIA AFTER AUGUST 15, 1975. AMONG THOSE BEING RETURNED REPORTEDLY WOULD BE KADER SIDDIQUI, A MISCREANT IN BANGLADESHI TERMS, SIDDIQUI'S ELDER BROTHER LATIF, AND SEVERAL AWAMI LEAGUE POLITICIANS INCLUDING FORMER MP (1970) NURUL ISLAM AND CHITTARANJAN SUTER. THE STORY SAID THAT THE RETURNEES WOULD BE FORMALLY RECEIVED AT RECEPTION CENTERS SET UP NEAR THE JESSORE, DINAJPUR AND MYMENSINGH BORDERS RESPECTIVELY. THE RETURNEES REPORTEDLY WOULD BE RECEIVED
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 DACCA 02568 121106Z

AT THE BORDER CAMPS BY BANGLADESHI OFFICIALS FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONERS AND BDR SECTOR COMMANDERS ON BEHALF OF THE BDG. THE STORY CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT ALTHOUGH SEVERAL AMONG THE RETURNEES HAD SOUGHT POLITICAL ASYLUM IN INDIA, THEIR REQUEST HAD BEEN DENIED.

2. SENIOR ITEFAQ JOURNALIST TOLD POLOFF THAT THE ITEFAQ STORY WAS ESSENTIALLY TRUE. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE DETAILS OF THE TRANSFER HAD BEEN WORKED OUT BY MAJOR-GENERAL DASTAGIR DURING HIS DISCUSSIONS IN DELHI. IT HAD BEEN AGREED THERE THAT INDIA WOULD REQUEST THE AWAMI LEAGUE POLITICIANS AND OTHER "MISCREANTS" TO LEAVE INDIA AND IF THEY DID NOO, THE GOI WOULD ESCORT THEM TO THE BORDER. THE JOURNALIST EXPRESSED SOME DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT KADER SIDDIQUI AND ESPECIALLY SUTER WOULD BE RELEASED. SUTER, A SCHEDULED CASTE HINDU LEFTIST AND SOME TIME AWAMI LEAGUER FROM FARIDPUR, WAS DESCRIBED AS THE MOST INFWUENTIAL AMONG THOSE EXILED POLITICIANS IN CALCUTTA.

3. APPARENTLY, THE ITEFAQ STORY HAS CREATED GREAT CONSTERNATION AMONG SOME SENIOR POLITICAL OBSERVERS, WHO FEAR INSTABILITY AND TROUBLE IF ALL THE MISCREANTS ARE RETURNED BTO BANGLADESH. THEY FEAR ZIA'S PREVIOUSLY STATED POSITION THAT MANESTY WOULD BE GIVEN TO ANY MISCREANTS WHO REPENTED AND CAME HOME.

4. COMMENT: ITEFAQ SEEMED TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO USE THE WORD "MISCREANT"; INSTEAD, THE WORDS "MIGRANTS" OR "RETURNEES" WERE USED. NO INDICATION WAS GIVEN IN THE STORY FOR THE INDIAN MOTIVE IN THE REPORTED HAND OVER NOR WAS THERE ANY SPECULATION ON WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO THE RETURNEES WHEN (AND IF) THEY GET TO BANGLADESH. ALTHOUGH ZIA MAY HAVE PROMISED AMNESTY, SPECIFIC CHARGES OF ROBBERY AND ARSON NO DOUBT ALREADY EXIST FOR WHICH SIDDIQUI COULD BE TRIED AND SOME OF THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DACCA 02568 121106Z

EAWAMI LEAGUE POLITICIANS HAD CHARGES AGAINST THEM WHEN THEY FLED TO INDIA.
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